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FEW THOUGHTS

ON THE NATURE

OF A

CHRISTIAN CHURCH,

AND THE DISCIPLINE ENJOINED

BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST;

As recorded in the New Testament.

BY

EVAN HERBERT,

Minister of the Gospel, at Boddicott, Oxon.

Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. 1 Peter iii. 8.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Colossians iii. 12.

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy. 2 Corinthians i. 24.

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TO THE READER.

IT is scarcely possible to pass through a world, abounding in imperfections, (not excepting the avowed followers of the Redeemer,) without being at some time or another, led into a peculiar train of thought, which, when directed by the Spirit of God, cannot fail to promote self-examination and humility, and afford matter calculated, in some humble measure, to forward the spiritual edification of the Church of God in the world.

The Writer of this has no desire to become an Author; he is of opinion, with many others, that Writers are too numerous already; but having the honor to preach the Gospel to a Society of Christians, about

to form themselves into a Church,* and having noticed with pungent feelings, the darkness still hovering over the minds of Christians in general, relative to Church order, he humbly dedicates these Remarks to his Friends, meeting at Boddicot; praying that a perusal of them may be blessed by the great Head of the Church, in establishing their souls, through the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and in promoting that love and harmony among themselves, which adorned the primitive

* Since writing these Thoughts, a Church was formed on the 10th of November, consisting of baptized and unbaptized persons, who have been hitherto taught to consider themselves fallible creatures, and have consequently exercised charity; several persons have been added since; God seems to be doing a new thing here, as there never was a Gospel Church in this place before: the Friends hope to announce the opening of a new Chapel shortly, to accommodate those who are at present frequently deterred from meeting, for want of room.

Church; and which ever will characterize the happy transition from death unto life.

Notwithstanding all that has been advanced, in unison with divine truth, by Doddridge, Owen, &c. &c. on the necessity of forbearance and charity among Christians, how little is practised. Through the ignorance of some, and the ambition of others, Love, the bond of perfectness, is become almost an empty name! Whilst Anti-Christian usurpation, deaf and blind to the wisest maxim, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise," Luke vi. 31, will ever mimick the beast of Rome! Happily for us, without the power—How solacing to adopt the ideas and language of the justly admired Cowper, on this subject,—

"Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,
But God will never."

Should these few hints fall under the dissecting eye of criticism, the Writer begs leave to notice, that they are not designed to impose a new hypothesis, or form a party; but rather an humble attempt, in compliance with the old commandment / John ii. 7, to guide the lowly follower of Jesus; not to make breaches, but to heal those already made, under a conviction, that the lively Oracles, to which he has uniformly adhered, are the only rule in matters of faith and practice.

May Christian Ministers and People be wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil; and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

E. H.

Boddicot, June, 1816.

A FEW THOUGHTS

ON THE NATURE OF A

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

GOD's Covenant with his people is the foundation of any Church State.*

When our Lord Jesus Christ had accomplished the work, which, pursuant to the counsels of eternity, he took upon him to perform, as God Man, Mediator;† after publishing the will of Deity personally, by preaching,—establishing his divine power and authority by unparalleled miracles,—displaying on various occasions the glorious attributes of omnipotence and omniscience, fulfilling the law and the prophets, relating to his offices; and after he had instituted ordinances congenial to the mild genius of that Gospel of which he is the substance; he abrogated the gloomy, ambiguous Jewish ritual; and discharged his people from every imputation of guilt and obnoxiousness to punishment, according to the emphatical language of inspiration, “For by one Offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.” Heb. x. 14.

* Dr. Owen.

† Psalm, xl. 6, 9. Isaiah, lxi. 1, 3. Luke, iv. 18, 19. Hebrews, x. 5. Isaiah, xi. 2, 3. Isaiah, lii. 13, 15. Isaiah liii. 10, 12.

Dispelling the mists of Jewish prejudice, the Sun of Righteousness arose, to enlighten and quicken nations heretofore sitting in darkness; Immanuel, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily, by a plenary atonement removed every distinction of people and tongue, so that Gentiles, as well as Jews, have access by one Spirit, unto the Father. Ephes. ii. 18.

Having drank the last dregs of the cup of righteous justice, in soul-rending agonies at Gethsemane, he finished the whole upon the cross; bowed his awful head; and submitted to death; thus, by the most unlikely means, according to human wisdom, the great Captain of our Salvation, by his own death, "Destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil." Heb. ii. 14.

Our Lord and Redeemer being the Head of all things to the Church, thereby exonerated his mystical body from the penalty due to sin, and the condemnation of the law; and by rising from the grave on the third day, according to prophetic assurance, the hidden mystery of justification to eternal life was unfolded; and declared to be, by virtue of his mediatorial interposition; so that every regenerated soul, in the exercise of faith, may rejoice with the apostle; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world." Ephes. i. 3, 4.

The frequent appearance of our dear Lord;

after his resurrection, removed from the distracted minds of his disciples, even a Thomas, every shadow of doubt respecting his Divinity; whilst by his cheering presence he confirmed them with the most animating and lively assurances of his love, power, and faithfulness; and delivering them from all error, as to their future conduct, he commanded them to preach the Gospel to every creature; explicitly delineating the characters interested in the blessing. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16; at the same time, adding an assurance of his protection, "Lo I am with you always, unto the end of the world," Matthew xxviii. 20. After which, we read, the Lord was received up into Heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God, triumphantly fulfilling that sublime prophecy, Psalm xxiv. "Lift up your heads, O, ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in."

Salvation, as to its procuring cause, having had its final accomplishment on Calvary; the attributes of Jehovah glorified, and the rectitude of God's moral Government solemnly exhibited, by the sacrifice of His only Begotten Son; there is, to every sensible sinner, full demonstration of that soul-cheering truth, that "God is just, and yet the Justifier of the most ungodly, who believes in Jesus," and, that in the Person and offices of the Great Redeemer, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have embraced each other." Psalm lxxxv. 10.

The grand commission having been given, as before observed, by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Apostles carefully observed his injunctions; but not till the day of Pentecost was fully come; and agreeably to His promise who cannot lie, the Comforter had descended; to inspire their souls with divine energy, and qualify them for the discharge of the arduous, yet honorable office assigned them; by solacing their dejected minds, refreshing their memories, and enduing them with powers, till that time unknown in the Church; namely, the gift of tongues, Acts ii. by which they were miraculously empowered, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to communicate the blessings of the covenant of peace, not among the Jews only, but to the dispersed, yet highly favoured subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom, among all nations.

Accordingly we find, that no circumstances prevented them, no privations retarded, no threatenings nor persecutions caused these heralds of sovereign love and mercy to desist; inspired and animated to obey God rather than man, they did not count even their lives too dear a sacrifice in promoting their Divine Saviour's Glory, and the spiritual edification of "the seed which the Lord hath blessed;" guided by the Spirit of truth, cities, towns, and villages, witnessed their indefatigable exertions,—raised above the puny stimulus of temporal aggrandizement, and relying wholly upon Divine veracity, they provided neither scrip nor purse, their hearts teeming with gratitude and constrained by love, having freely received, so they distributed, the Holy Ghost by wonders and signs,

working with them, "And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." Acts xiii. 48.

In process of time, as appears from the Sacred Volume, and corroborated by Ecclesiastical History, Churches or Societies were formed, of men and women; who, in the judgment of charity, not of infallibility (for the Apostles themselves were deceived), had been previously changed by regenerating grace, and led from the darkness and blindness of nature, to discern and feel experimentally the inestimable truths contained in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as exhibited by the ministerial exertions of the Preachers. 1 Corinthians i. 21. E/44

Of which Churches, we have particular accounts in the New Testament, the motives and spirit by which they were influenced, the discipline they maintained, as well as the end they had in view; namely, "To shew forth the praises of Him, who had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." Peter i. 2, 9.

Now, as it is impossible, speaking after the manner of men, that any Society, in this imperfect state, can continue in being, that has no rule to observe, and as order, holiness, and consummate harmony, are essential to the glorious Author of all we are and have, so, "Holiness becometh his Church for ever;" destitute of it, she ceases to be "the pillar and ground of truth." Calculated and designed to diffuse happiness and joy, wherever its benign influences are experienced, "the perfect law of liberty" which the King of Zion has enjoined his willing

subjects to observe, is in perfect unison with the law of nature, with this difference, that it is enforced by the superior obligations and privileges of the Gospel; not teaching the cheerless lesson of working for life, but from spiritual life in the soul; its language is, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Phill. iv. 8. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ, in prescribing a rule of conduct for his people, has imposed nothing upon them, which is not morally excellent, conducive to their happiness, and an exact counterpart of his own primeval motive in laying down his life for his friends, namely, love; "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 10.

Whatever name it be called by, whether grace, favour, mercy, or else, it is indisputably the origin of Salvation, independent of any thing in us; "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy," Romans ix. 16. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Timothy i. 9.

The principle of faith also, by which we apprehend and appropriate the blessing of salvation, even the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus, is likewise a gift, and a very essential

part of the privilege it is designed to embrace: "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Ephesians ii. 8.

Love then is the golden chain by which the whole mystery of human redemption, from first to last, is indissolubly connected; he that acts therefore from other motives, according to his testimony, who leaned on the Saviour's bosom, has his mind (notwithstanding profession) enveloped in that darkness, which, unremoved, is the awful presage of "Outer darkness, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth," 1 John ii. 11. Hence it appears a most unwarrantable usurpation, for any man, or set of men, who, if they feel as Christians, know they are "not their own, but bought with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 20, to arrogate to themselves, contrary to our Lord's command, and the example of his Apostles, a right, to exercise coercive vindictive measures in the Church; take their fellow servants by the throat, or at least wound their feelings, whether it be by unscriptural censure, suspension, exclusion, or else; making thereby a breach in the spiritual building without cause, and furnishing the enemies of God and truth with an opportunity to blaspheme, whilst they deter tender minds from making an open profession of the sacred cause of the Redeemer.

The Writer of these hints has no idea of foregoing discipline, God forbid, "Let your light so shine before men," cannot be dispensed with; but, alas! revenge and private resentment are too often the springs of action in men, where

forbearance and meekness ought to rule, who, very unhappily prostitute thereby the most salutary regulations to the basest purposes; and whilst acting under the influence of splenetic dispositions, in pretending to extract dross, infuse deadly poison. In order therefore that the humble enquirer may be enabled, under a divine blessing, to form consistent views of the discipline our indulgent Master has bequeathed to his Church, it will be expedient to examine minutely some of the passages in the New Testament, which treat expressly on the subject; previously enquiring (as our blessed Lord declared his kingdom is not of this world) what views are to be formed of the Church collectively, in order to ascertain the relation subsisting individually.

“One is your Master, even Christ,” is indelibly stamped upon, and forms the Magna Charta of the glorious Gospel dispensation, the free, vivifying atmosphere of the Church; whilst she continued to breathe in it, like a prudent chaste virgin, she enjoyed health in all her members, till pride, and the denser fogs of priestcraft introduced through the unnatural alliance with the civil power, polluted her, with disorders as numerous and complicated, as unregenerate nature under satanic influences could bring to birth; hence Popes, Prelates, Lords over God’s heritage, comprising an innumerable, pestiferous swarm of holy depredators, linked together by their own ingenious policy, from his Holiness

down to the Bell-toller.

Be this as it may, the man of common under-

standing, with the New Testament in his hand, and the grace of God in his heart, knows that every pretension to superiority in the Church of Christ is groundless; the least appearance of such a disposition being evidently a spawn of Anti-Christ in embryo, that wants nothing but opportunity to issue forth bulls and anathemas; and however plausible these things may appear to the credulous, or grateful to the assuming, they ought, by the spiritually minded, to be boldly and unequivocally rejected; remembering that the man in goodly apparel or favored with affluence, has no ground from Scripture to expect any partiality from the Church, more than the beggar; "God is no respecter of persons, One is your Master, all ye are brethren," Matt. xxiii. 8; James ii. 9. And now, according to the order in which this interesting subject is developed in the Sacred Volume, which more or less pervades a considerable portion of the New Testament, and particularly the epistolary parts; notice again, what constitutes a Church of Jesus Christ:—The Church, in its most proper and comprehensive sense, is the great body of believers, of every nation, kindred, colour, and denomination; and of every age, since the fall of Adam to the last individual, that God by his Holy Spirit will call, to embrace the Saviour and rely upon his merits, for salvation and eternal life. This is the multitude of which John had a vision, Rev. vii. 9, called by the Apostle, the Elect, in contradistinction to the rest, Rom. xi. 7, i. e. that part of the human race which God Almighty has, in his unerring councils, determined to bring to holiness here, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief

of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 13, as preparatory to the full enjoyment of the beatific vision beyond the grave; and all this without consulting man, or assigning any cause, but that which is nevertheless intelligible to the meanest capacity; "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Romans ix. 21. This is what is meant by eternal and personal Election, uniformly found in the creeds of our judicious evangelizing brethren; by which they are distinguished from the ancient Universalists, Socinians, Arians, Arminians, Baxterians, with many other ancient and modern flesh-pleasing Systems, too numerous for insertion. The Apostle of the Gentiles, however, whose orthodoxy no good man will question, declares the Church was bought with the blood of God, Acts xx. 28; nor did he fear, in holy triumph, to challenge the universe, as to the efficacy of the atonement; "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? it is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Romans viii. 33, 34.

But to attend to our design, the candid Christian, whilst reading of a Church in the house of Nymphas, Colossians iv. 15; of one in the dwelling of Philemon, Philemon 2; of another in the abode of Priscilla and Aquila, Romans xvi. 5; will readily perceive the term (scripturally embraced) refers not to an unmeaning heap of stones and rubbish, vulgarly supposed to be more holy than other places; nor to any nam-

ber or description of men, usurping anti-apostolic authority over the consciences and pockets of their fellow mortals; 1 Cor. iv. 12; Acts xx. 33, &c. but to a Society of rational beings, constituting a spiritual building of lively stones, by the quickening energy of the Holy Spirit; 1 Peter ii. 5. Persons who have been brought from under the vassalage of sin and satan, to enjoy the light and liberty of the children of God. Disgusted with the maxims of the world, the insipid philippics of nominal Christians, and united by a sympathy of soul, peculiar to their state, they resolve, in the strength of Omnipotence, to give themselves up first to the Lord, and then to one another, according to the will of God; 2 Corinthians viii. 5. Satisfied with the views and experience of each other, they bind themselves in the bond of charity, "to follow the same rule," to mind the same things; striving to regulate their lives individually, as well as their conduct collectively, according to the mind of Christ, as practised by the Apostles and primitive Christians: namely, "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. Moreover, every Church, modelled by the New Testament, recognises the two positive ordinances, which were enjoined and instituted by our Lord Jesus Himself. Baptism and the Supper—being evidently designed to be continued in the Church to the end of time, 1 Cor. xi. 26, to the exclusion of all others, invented by designing men. The former, to be attended to but once, and by Believers only, Acts viii. 37; Matthew iii. 8; humbly conceiving, if language

mean any thing, from the general use of the word Baptize, abundantly proved by learned men to mean nothing more nor less than dipping, plunging, &c. that the subjects are to be put under water, thereby declaring their desire to die unto sin, and live a new life unto God; by a voluntary act,* rationally embracing the grand design of the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, John i. 3, 8; Coll. ii. 12; Rom. vi. 4; as well as answering a good conscience, and honorably following the Primitive Worthies by that unerring rule, "If ye love Me, keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. The latter, i. e. the Supper, as often as convenient; being admirably calculated and designed, by our indulgent High Priest, to confirm and solace the weary pilgrim on his journey from time to eternity. Oh! happy souls, who feast on the substance, whilst attending to the sign! How oft does the hungry, sin-sick Christian, behold to his comfort, through the medium of the element of bread, the mangled Body of his dear Lord! How often, by faith, can he view Him bruised for his transgressions! Who can describe the mingled emotions of his fertile mind on these occasions, whilst traversing the gloomy garden, and awful Calvary?—Say, ye highly favoured few; if ye can, how pleased and grieved, when the hard heart, of which you so much complain, softened

* This in general is performed by all that are baptized when they are adult, as being by their *own actual consent* baptized in the name of Christ. Dr. Owen in loc.

It may not be superfluous to add what the late Mr. Edwards, of America, has observed on this subject, "Repentance is a qualification that must be visible in order to Baptism!" Edwards on the Affections, p. 380 and 381, "They should profess their faith in Jesus Christ, &c."

by the genial warmth of the Holy Comforter, melts into sympathy and love! With mingled feelings of joy and contrition, you rejoice it is true, under a sense of pardon; whilst grieved, and partially tasting bitterness of spirit, for the sins which occasioned it. Insipid, Christian, as these things may appear to the natural man, who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Corinthians ii. 14, you can, however, set to your seal that God is true, by realizing, at such seasons, fresh assurances of interest in that Blood, the wine is intended to represent.

Thus, as it respects believers, by the different Ordinances of divine appointment, the great business of sanctification is promoted, sin mortified, and satan, in many of his devices, defeated; while the new principles of faith, hope, and love, are invigorated in the soul; like sons, not slaves, of the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, they are regaled from time to time, sitting under the banner of redeeming love; sweetly impressed with gratitude and joy, and refreshed with the solacing breezes of the Holy Spirit; they breathe in the views of the Psalmist; "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 28.

Having thus imperfectly glanced at the nature of a Gospel Church, its standing Ordinances, and the Characters composing it, according to the New Testament; the following Maxims will, it is presumed, appear eligible; as the basis and cement of Christian union.

1st. To reject all creeds and formulas—bring every opinion to the law and to the testimony, Isaiah viii. 20.*

2d. To maintain the separate and independent government of our own Society, as to the choice of Officers, and the admission of Members; taking it for granted, according to divine appointment, that no Officers are necessary but Pastors and Deacons.

N. B. Every candid man that can read his Testament must know this truth,—that many practise another course, proves, that they are wise in their generation. Luke xvi. 8.

3d. To observe inviolable secrecy in all matters relating to the Church.

4th. To keep up and maintain the regular worship of God among ourselves, not forsaking

* Subscription to all Human Creeds implies two dispositions contrary to true religion, and both expressly forbidden by the Author of it; these two dispositions are, love of dominion over the conscience in the imposer, and an abject preference of slavery in the subscriber: the first usurps the rights of Christ, the last swears allegiance to a pretender; the first domineers and gives laws like a tyrant, the last truckles like a vassal; the first assumes a dominion incompatible with his frailty, impossible even to his dignity, yea denied to the dignity of angels; the last yields a low submission inconsistent with his own dignity, and ruinous to that very religion which he pretends by these means to support. Jesus Christ does not require, he does not allow, yea he expressly forbids both these dispositions, well knowing, that an allowance of these would be a suppression of the finest dispositions of the human soul, and a degrading of revelation beneath the religion of nature.

Rob. Preface to Saurin's Sermons, 3 vol.

the assembling of ourselves together; except in unavoidable cases, from a conviction that the comfort and prosperity of a religious Society are promoted, and the hands of the Minister strengthened by the punctual attendance of every Member; whereas; on the contrary, so far as any Member neglects this his obvious duty, he injures himself and the Church to which he belongs.

5th. To endeavour to promote the comfort of the Pastor by all practicable means, esteeming him very highly in love for his work's sake. 1 Thessalonians v. 13.

6th. To watch over each other in love, warning them that are unruly, comforting the feeble minded, supporting the weak, being patient towards all men, suffering nothing to be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, esteeming each other better than himself, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Ephesians iv. 32.

7th. To be as willing to receive as to give admonition; from a consciousness, that no one is exempt from a liability to err, owing to the depravity of our nature; and knowing it to be a mark of a proud and impenitent mind to despise reproof. Proverbs v. 13.

8th. In cases of particular and painful discipline, to follow still the unerring guide; if thy brother's offence be personal, and he shall tres-

pass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone, and if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established, and if he shall neglect to hear thee, tell it to the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man or a publican. Matthew xviii. 17.

N. B. This divine rule is very little attended to, it is to be feared: petty personal aversions often extend to the subversion of all scriptural order, and involve Ministers and people in inextricable difficulties; hurried by the inward corruption of the heart, and forgetting the Bible; the strongest party usurps Popish authority, denouncing anathemas and exclusions upon the most trivial occasions; unhappily evincing thereby a degree of splenetic rancour, rarely witnessed in societies of worldlings: on the contrary, were this divine maxim resorted to, what evils might be prevented—paper wars, detraction, prayerless meetings, leanness of soul, degrading quarrels, and divisions; the enemies of Zion would not have to say, ah! so would we have it, nor the susceptible mourn in secret. “Oh! that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest.”—Is a shade of difference in sentiment, a partiality to another Minister, unavoidable absence or a desire to withdraw to another part of God’s vineyard, viewed in the Sacred Volume as a cause for exclusion or censure, whilst the moral deportment cannot be impeached?—It will be difficult to establish any

such hypothesis without perverting the truth by the introduction of human laws;—such conduct then is the offspring of carnal motives and worldly policy, and can have nothing to do with that charity, without which (profess what we may) we are but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, 1 Cor. xiii. 1; Romans xiv. But if the offence be public and scandalous, such as drunkenness, adultery, dishonesty, apostasy from the truth, and such like, to “deliver such an one to the world,” mark the motive, not revenge “for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,” 1 Cor. v. 5.

This appears to be the only scriptural ground of exclusion, the case alluded to in Matthew xviii. appears to be a personal animosity; wherein the offending person evades reconciliation and consequently excludes himself.*

under 9th. To consider and observe with Christian philanthropy, Galatians vi. 1. “If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Whence it appears, that a neglect of this heavenly precept attaches suspicion to the parties concerned, or it must be painfully admitted that good men can, to gratify angry feelings, deny themselves altogether; an idea that ought to be deprecated, as subversive of the mild and amiable genius of genuine Christianity: but alas! it is too true, that the spirit of revenge is in

* None excluded from a Church State but such as are grossly ignorant, persecutors, idolaters, and men scandalous in their lives. Dr. Owen in loc.

many instances, carried to such excess as to amount to an absolute refusal of adjustment, even *vice versa*, upon the application of the supposed offenders: thus violating every divine injunction of a pacific nature; but by which the parties offended, Ananias like, Acts xxiii. 2, become wilful and deliberate aggressors. Peter! hadst thou been dealt with thus, thy pungent sorrow would have terminated in hopeless despair! How couldst thou have strengthened thy brethren, and fire future generations with thy ecstasy? Peter i. 3. Happy thought, whilst the potsherd of the earth would crush his fellow, "God is love," he never yet said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain, Isaiah xlv. 19.

Lastly, as we shall obtain help from God, Strive together as the heart of one man for the faith of the Gospel, avoiding legality on the one hand and antinomianism on the other, trusting in, and looking to, the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus for wisdom and spiritual aid: continue steadfast in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship in breaking of bread and prayers, that when it shall please our Heavenly Father to call any of us from this militant state, we may, through sovereign unmerited grace, be received into the Church triumphant above, to join the happy choir in ascribing glory, honor, power, and dominion, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever. Amen.

THE END.

J.G. Rusher, Letter-press & Copper-plate Printer, Banbury.









































































